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Pappas Georgios (Панас Йорган)

gspappasuo@gmail.com

PhD філософії, професор кафедри
іспанської мови та цивілізаційних досліджень
Грецького відкритого університету (ЕАР),
професор кафедри філософії, освіти та психології
факультету філософії Афіньського університету

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION IN THE WORK SECTOR

1. Concept, content and meaning of communication

Communication is the total of written, oral and pictorial meanings that flow directly or indirectly within a company from one person to another and are intended to impact the ideas, affects, actions and behaviour of individuals (Armstrong, 1988: 615-631). Communication is not a mere transfer of information or meanings. It is also a process of contact, mutual comprehension and interaction between people and groups.

Communication among the employees in a company is not only related to the execution of tasks, but refers to the whole spectrum of human relations. In other words, a distinction is made between the interpersonal dimension of communication (effective human relations) and its organizational dimension (formal communication channels imposed by the organizational structure for the transmission of information). Both dimensions are important, because if a company is appropriately organized (with suitable communication channels), so as to promote effective communication, it is also necessary for the individuals to be capable of communicating (i.e. to have communicative abilities and a common cognitive field), so as to transmit the messages effectively and to cause the suitable actions.

The importance of communication is immense in guaranteeing the smooth operation and development of a company. Management

executives expend, on average, more than 70% of their time in communicating within the workspace. Planning and control, two of the functions of management, are mainly based in the process and the systems of information. Guidance, leadership, motivation, good relations between super ordinate and subordinate employees, human relations in general and the social climate in companies and organizations are never possible to achieve without effective communication. Furthermore, monitoring the non-corporate environment, adjusting the company to it, identifying opportunities to exploit and threats to counter all demand constant and effective communication of the company with its environment. Particularly in the modern era of globalisation, the abilities of management executives in communication face a serious challenge, as the constantly increasing volume of new data must be absorbed and assimilated fast, in order to guarantee the survival and prosperity of a company. In addition, communication is the sole outlet for the presentation of the corporate image to the external environment and for transmitting information regarding the activity, the efficiency, the opportunities and its social responsibility.

As regards the use of communication in the for the leadership functions of the managers, this necessary (Aldag & Stearns, 1991: 472-498) for:

- Delegating duties and giving instructions for their execution,
- Submitting visions, conveying goals, policies, procedures and practices of the organization to the subordinates and ensuring their comprehension.
- Familiarising subordinates with their performance and rewarding it,
- Making the supervisor familiar with the goals, views, needs, weaknesses and abilities of the subordinates and ensuring their comprehension,
- Unifying beliefs,
- Accomplishing the training and overall development of individuals,
- Developing good relations, positive climate, and group spirit as well as a sense of familiarity and security
- Solving disputes and generating consensus and cooperation

2. Improving Communication

Despite the defining role of communication for the efficiency of the executives and of the company, little attention is paid to it both in the level of training and in the level of managerial practice. This results in an unsatisfactory development of the executive communication skills and in an unsatisfactory development of efficient methods and procedures of corporate communication. Consequently, the real causes of malfunctions, lack of coordination, bad decisions, lack of motivation, reasons of misunderstandings, existence of inadequate human relations and social conflict are often rooted in communication.

The constant improvement of communication constitutes one of the basic duties of the management executive, since it forms a determining parameter both of decision making and of guidance towards their materialisation. In terms of quantity, effort focuses on increasing the amount of information that is transmitted, while in terms of quality one, the goal is to limit the dissonance between what transmitters wish to transmit and what receivers comprehend. The improvement of communication passes through the manipulation of all the variables which impact on its process. The development of knowledge and of interpersonal communication skills within the workspace, forms a basic priority and concern for every manager. In the ensuing section the main principles or rules will be presented, which, if well applied in practice, could perceptibly improve on interpersonal communication.

3. Message transmission process

The efficiency of message transmission from the transmitter is significantly improved if a proper process is followed. The basic steps of this process are (Durbin, 1998: 360-365):

a. Preparation of communication, which includes the definition of the corporate goal, the control of the receiver (affective mood, needs, values, education etc.) and its differences from the receiver, as well as the appropriate mode, time and place for the transmission of the message. The effort and the time of this preparation depend on the significance of the target. As regards the comprehension of the differences between transmitter and receiver, good communication between two people presupposes comprehension of their differences. These differences are mainly located in the levels of perception and code. As regards the differences

in the level of perception, the transmitter –in this case the management executive- is required to try to comprehend the way in which the receiver views his surroundings, his needs, his expectations, his knowledge, his psychological and physiological needs. The dissimilar codes are often the main causes of problematic interpersonal communication. The need to communicate with the same code, i.e., to speak the same language, forms a basic parameter of improving communication. Using simple language, words that leave little margin of alternative interpretations, undoubtedly improve communication.

b. Message transmission. In this stage the transmission of the message materializes. Efficiency in this stage depends on preparation as well as the transmission skills of the transmitter, such as tone and intonation of voice and body language, i.e., posture, gestures, facial expressions etc. The means of message transmission forms the most crucial factor in interpersonal oral communication, because it does not only convey information but feelings as well. Words often play a minor role compared to voice and the body, both in the meaning that one desires to impart and, in the conception, interpretation, comprehension and impact on the receiver.

c. Control: After the transmission of the message, the transmitter could usefully control whether the message has been received, interpreted and comprehended by the receiver in the way desired by the former, or whether there are possible discrepancies to correct.

4. Improvement of the message

The message significantly defines the efficiency of communication. The syntactical properties, the form, the attitude, the intonation and its volume all define the possibilities of apprehension and comprehension. Some basic features that compose a correct message are presented in the following lines (Herman & Friedman, 1993: 78):

Clarity – accuracy: Every message should be typified by maximum possible clarity in order to become easily noticed and comprehended by the receiver. This depends on the code used as well as the structural properties of the message.

Comprehensiveness: A message should contain all the necessary information so that what we want to impart becomes understood by the receiver.

Conciseness – Brevity: The conciseness and brevity of the message increases the possibilities that it be noticed by the receiver and naturally reduces the cost of communication.

Correctness – Truth: Messages with incorrect and false content will soon cause a problem of trust –which is a basic prerequisite of communication- between interlocutors.

5. Written and oral communication

In order to manage the process of communication, management executives must compare the relative advantages of written and oral forms of communication.

Written Communication: Presents files and the possibility to refer to them. It can be used in order to reduce uncertainty on the side of the recipient and to reduce misunderstandings falsification and permeability during the process of communication.

Oral Communication: Enables the exchange of information. It can be used to reduce the possibility of delay in receiving feedback or reply. The transmitter can immediately assess the nature and level of the recipients' comprehension.

Through the appropriate combination of oral and written communication a management executive can guarantee the satisfaction if the purposes of communication, the comprehension can be maximized and the negative phenomena can be reduced, as will the limitations in the process of communication.

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